Q BITS

Wednesday
March 12, 2008
7:00 PM

Scott County
E-recycling

The Quad Cities Computer Society gratefully acknowledges

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http://www.soloconnect.com
for providing the site for our Web Page at
http://www.qcs.org

This Month in Q BITS..

The *QCS* is a member of

apcug

Monthly meetings are open to the general public.

QCS Review
High-Definition TV
presented by
Zeiglin's Home TV and Appliance
with Lee Zeglin
309-797-8258
zeglins.Moline@homeappliances.com

by Joe Durham

The new electronic world of HDTV will soon be broadcast universally across the country. Analog TV stations and signals will be a thing of the past. This will all occur February 17th, 2009. Lee Zeglin, manager of the Moline store came the QCS to explain what this implies for us.

Those of us who have an old analog TV and get their television signal from outdoor or rabbit ear antennas will be directly affected. Users who have coaxial cable service like Mediacom will not be adversely affected immediately, so no action is required. Local stations carried by satellite and dish receivers will have to make changes in equipment in order to get the HDTV signal.

As Lee explained broadcasters can transmit more channels and programming through an HDTV electronic pipe than can be done through the analog pipe. The ability to offer more programming and a clearer picture are driving these changes.

Consumers who are directly affected and do not wish to purchase a new digital TV can obtain a coupon from the government which will help to defray the costs of purchasing a converter that will change the digital signal to an analog signal for older TVs. Go to **www.dtv.gov** and click Consumer Corner. At that link you can apply for two $40 coupons toward the purchase of a converter.

Lee explained that this option will display the digital signal on your analog TV in wide screen mode, and that you will have black bars on the top and bottom of the screen where no display is given. He said that in some instances this conversion can make for a smaller viewing experience on screens less then 27".

Would You Like to receive your *QBITS* via email?

The *QBITS* can now be produced in Acrobat PDF format and sent to you email box. If you desire to have the newsletter sent to you electronically instead of by US Mail, let

Patty Lowry,
QBITS co-editor
(563-332-8679)
heidiho@revealed.net.

The QCS will then arrange to email your next issue to you.

Moving? Send an address change to:
felspaw@sbcglobal.net

But as he emphasized repeatedly it is a decision we have to make. Either method will work: a converter or purchasing a digital television.

Digital television come in three versions: a 540 per lines version, a 720p and a 1080p version. And among these resolution types are two image standards: plasma screens and LCD (Liquid Crystal Device) screens.

He noted that plasma screens have suffered from the burn in effect that occurs if a motionless broadcast image remains on the screen for some length of time. On the other hand, plasmas screens are noted for sharper colors and contrast.

LCD screens are backlit by a florescent bulb, have a matte finish which reduces glare. These screens have the reputation of exhibiting less color than plasma TVs. Recently manufacturers have improved the LCD quality and closed this gap.

The plasma screens are more expensive and are made in screen sizes 32" or larger. LCD versions are less expensive and are offered in a wider array of screen sizes. Just recently a 15" model was created for sale.

When looking for a digital TV, Lee emphasized that you need to compare the image quality directly at the store. Consumer preference with color depth and quality will vary greatly. He also suggested that you have the salesman display the analog stations on the screen, so that you will not be surprised by the inferior picture quality when you get home and have to watch an analog TV program. This inferior effect occurs on all digital TVs.

Look also for high contrast ratios, this determines the inherent sharpness of your picture. Additionally look at major brands if you wish service support: LG, Samsung, Sony, etc. Off brands will not offer service support and the consumer is left to purchase a completely new product when the original fails.

LCD digital screens can last up to 19 years before dimming. Lee explained that as with any electronic appliance that goal can sometimes be short or long.

You should consider purchasing a surge protector with 1000 joules or greater to protect your digital TV from the electronic shocks that inevitably come through your home. This a is a major cause of digital TV failure and repair.

Additionally be aware that mounting your digital TV can add a large extra cost to your purchase price. Unless you are certain that you will not move your TV, you may not want to consider this option. In the near term there will be a wireless interface for digital TV so that by purchasing that option you may lower your mounting costs because you will not have to install special wiring for it.

What do these options all mean? We have just over a year to make our decisions as our budgets allows. We should start doing so now, as the TV views landscape will be irrevocably altered after February 17th, 2009. The QCS would like thank Lee for his fine overview of the choices we face in the days ahead.

Moving on to Vista – Part 3

by Neil Stahfest Software Librarian, Tacoma Area PC User Group, WA
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www.tapcug.org

Your PC's desktop is the largest, most user defined area on your PC's screen. It contains all your own shortcuts, folder icons and your personal desktop picture. The desktop is really just a personal file folder on drive C. That means that any work you do on the desktop is saved for you on Drive C and not lost when you turn the computer off. Of course any documents, pictures, etc. that are "saved" on your desktop can be moved or copied to other folders on your hard drive.

After a while some of, make that most of us, find our desktop becomes loaded with program icons and shortcut icons. Program shortcut icons are a convenient way to get to programs that you use a lot. Unfortunately, when you install new programs most of them add a desktop shortcut and soon you have a desktop full of shortcuts, making it hard to find a shortcut when you want it. Here are a couple of solutions to this clutter.

The left end of the taskbar contains a "Quick Launch Toolbar+. By default, Windows Vista places one or two program icons here (i.e. Internet Explorer). You can drag a limited number of additional shortcut icons for your favorite programs to this area and save space on your desktop. A "feature" of the Quick Launch Toolbar is that you only have to point at the program icons there and left-click once to start the program. This might seem a little confusing at first if you are used to double clicking on a program icon to start it, but you'll probably get used to it pretty fast.

Program shortcuts on your desktop point to programs that are also listed in your Start menu. The most frequently used programs can be seen when you click on the Start button. On the Start menu, click on "All Programs" to see all the other programs installed on your computer. You may need to use the scroll bar to see all of them and you will probably find more programs than you have shortcuts on your desktop. So, once you confirm that a program shortcut points to a program listed on the Start menu, you can safely delete infrequently used desktop shortcuts.

A third approach to reducing desktop clutter is to consolidate shortcuts. If you have multiple programs that do similar tasks (i.e. A photo catalog and picture manipulation program), create a desktop folder named "Photos". Then drag your shortcuts into the "Photos" folder and you're done.

Vista comes with a new set of desktop pictures. Access to alternative desktop pictures is similar, but slightly different, from what you may be used to with Windows XP. Right-click on an empty area of the desktop and click on "Personalize". On the "Personalization" menu select "Desktop Background". An array of available pictures will appear. Scroll through the pictures, select one. Make a selection from "How should the picture be positioned" and click OK.

That's fine if all you want to use are the pictures that came with Vista. What if you want to use something different? Just follow the steps list above but when you get to the "Desktop Background", instead of selecting one of the available pictures, next to where it says "Picture Location" click once on "Windows wallpapers". You'll see a list of other areas that contain pictures and colors. Want to use a photograph that you saved to your computer instead? Click the browse button. On the left side of the "Browse" screen, click on "Pictures". From the Picture folders on the right side of the Browse screen, make your selection, use the "How should the picture be positioned" if needed, and press the Open button to finish.

The Cartridge Family

by Grant Fuller, a member of Big Blue & Cousins, Canada
www.bbc.org
newsletters@bbc.org

We're beat. I hate to admit it. I come from more innocent times when fairness was something to strive for. Family values were not measured by the Sopranos but by families with more law-abiding objectives.

"I hate to give up without a fight but I do not hold much hope for us. If you have a printer that functions well by refilling cartridges, keep it. Repair it when it becomes necessary and show it your unconditional love."

I hate to give up without a fight but I do not hold much hope for us. If you have a printer that functions well by refilling cartridges, keep it. Repair it when it becomes necessary and show it your unconditional love. The new printers come with chips on the cartridges that the "dealers" say are for telling us when our ink levels get low. Those chips also tell the printer to stop printing after a certain number of nozzle firings or page counts and I strongly suspect that one of my printers is set to refuse a cartridge that was removed and replaced.

I bought some replacement cartridges that were substitutes at a much better price than the gouging name branders, but the trick to beating the dealers required me to remove the chip from the old cartridge and put it on the new one.

This is much easier than it sounds, an exacto knife can pop the chip out of its little plastic holder, and it can then be slipped into the ready and waiting slot on the new cartridge.

I replaced the colour cartridges and the printer began flashing lights in the tank bed as each cartridge was replaced. It took me a while to figure out what it was trying to tell me but I should have known right away. I assumed that my chip replacement skills were not up to par or maybe I had been swindled while attempting to swindle the other swindlers. Out of curiosity, I took one of my black cartridges out (this printer has two blacks) and checked it for ink, still lots. I replaced it and the blinking light began on this slot as well. The same thing happened with the other black.

Apparently, there is more going on with this little chip than meets the eye. Well, actually, nothing meets the eye, it's all too small, but this new aggravation raises the stakes. Now the ink re-filling industry has a chip resetter that we can buy which presumably sets the chip to its original state where it says to the printer, "I am brand new and full." I have not tried this but I would like to hear from anyone who has, preferably, if you have had success. If I can find a way to beat these printers I own, I will keep them in good repair. The price of ink for inkjets is beyond outrageous and some people are getting very rich. I can only try to imagine what wonderful gifts we would find under the tree of the Cartridge Family this year.

Obtained from APCUG with the author's permission for publication by APCUG member groups.

Are There Others on Your Wireless Network?
by Ken Colburn, President, of Data. Doctors Computer Services (originally in Locker-

gnome) Simi Valley Computer User Group

The popularity of wireless networks in homes and businesses is due, in large part, to the ease in setting them up. Most folks can pull a wireless router out of the box, plug it in, and get some kind of connection in a relatively short period of time; but this also presents a problem.

The default setup for most wireless networking base stations bypass any form of security (I suspect that this helps cut down the number of support calls the manufacturer takes from new users).

Your question really needs to be answered for two scenarios: wireless networks with no security enabled and wireless networks with security measures in place.

Invoking any level of "encryption" on your base station will require anyone that wants to connect to have the "key," which is generated during the setup. This step will not completely eliminate the possibility of being' 'hacked" by someone that really wants to get to you, but it will certainly cause those looking for an open ???

Most every wireless router has the ability to track what machines are connecting to it and stores this information in log files.

Reprinted from Toggle, the January 2008 newsletter of the Tacoma-Seattle Area Microcomputer Users.

WINDOWS MOVIE MAKER PROBLEMS
By Russ Merritt

Recently, our two computers running Windows XP lost the ability to run Windows Movie Maker. We got the message "Movie Maker has encountered a problem and needs to shut down."

All efforts to get around this

problem or to work through it failed. There was no information in the Microsoft data base on Movie Maker that discussed this problem. The desktop PC was OEM (Original Equipment Manufacturer) and they would not discuss this problem because Movie Maker is a part of the Operating System and therefore support had to come from the original manufacturer.

When the Toshiba Laptop had the same problem, Toshiba was contacted, but the warranty was out of date. By using the original recovery disk, the system was recovered, but all of the applications that had been added since purchase, had to be reinstalled.

Then the laptop failed again. Toshiba again was contacted and they told us the same thing, EXCEPT this time the tech gave a URL that might have some answers for us and it DID!

It reported that Windows Internet Explorer 7 evidenced some conflict with Windows Movie Maker. It was suggested that Internet Explorer be removed and provided a Microsoft Web site that had the information.

Basically, the instructions were to use **Add/Remove Programs** to remove Internet Explorer. It was stated that when this removal took place, Internet Explorer 6 would be restored. We did this. Internet Explorer 6 was restored and - Windows Movie Maker began to work again.

The New, The Best, and The Worst
January 2008
Collected by Pim Borman, Webmaster, SW Indiana PC Users Group, Inc.
http://swipcug.apcug.org
swipcug@gmail.com

Needles, Haystacks and Processing
Finding the needle in a haystack is the proverbial example of an impossible task. Wrongly so. Spread

the contents of the haystack out over a large area and get 1000 helpers to each check a small amount of hay. The needle will be found in less than no time. It is a basic example of parallel processing.

According to WIKIPEDIA (**http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SETI**), as far back as 1960 astronomers were speculating that any intelligent life forms present in the Universe might be detected by electromagnetic signals reaching us from space. Some astronomers started a Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence (SETI) on a limited scale that over the years grew to include multiple radio-telescopes searching more and more radio bands for significant signals.

It soon became clear that looking for intelligent signals amongst the enormous volume of recorded data was even worse than finding a needle in a haystack. Parallel processing to the rescue! With an untold number of personal computers worldwide, capable of Internet access and sitting idle most of the time, an enormous amount of potential processing power was going untapped. The University of California at Berkeley (UCB), with sponsorship of The Planetary Society, started project SETI@home in 1999 to put many of those computers to work. They found many volunteers willing to download a small program on their computers, running in the background, to analyze small chunks of radio-telescope data for signs of intelligence and return the results. As of now there are some 3 million contributors, but nary a sign of intelligent life yet. In any case, the enormous amount of computer processing by this project far surpasses what the best supercomputer might be able to do, at least until quantum computers will have been perfected.

The success of SETI@home inspired many other volunteer computing projects supporting worthwhile scientific causes. According to The Economist (12-8-

2007) these include design of drugs against AIDS, search for new prime numbers, climate modeling and many others. It requires some snappy programming skills to send small chunks of a large problem to thousands of computers, provide them with the means to perform a set task, return the results, and combine the results for final evaluation before sending out a new crop of queries. That task has been made easier with a dedicated program, BOINC (Berkeley Open Infrastructure for Network Computing), made available by UCB. Over 40 BOINC projects are in operation, including many life sciences, Help Conquer Cancer, and Discover Dengue Drugs.

Impressive as the computer power may be that is being exerted on these projects, there is still room for significant improvement. The short history of the PC not only includes a dramatic improvement in CPU processing speed, but also in auxiliary components that speed up graphics performance. In response to the extreme image rendition requirements of computer games, fast graphics cards have become available that use special processing chips and hardware to relieve the load on the Central Processing Unit. Rendering the millions of pixels that make up a screen image is perfectly suited to parallel processing, a task for which the graphics chips are optimized. Further adapting these chips to participate in general purpose programming may be a way to increase the parallel processing power of a desktop computer anywhere from 10- to 50-fold. NVIDIA and AMD, the largest graphics-card manufacturers, are working on it. Nvidia has already set up a product line for non-graphics applications and is developing a specialized programming language to go with it.

Next time you hear complaints that something is like finding a needle in a haystack, tell them it's easy: many hands make light work.

Foxit Reader for PDF Files

Acrobat Reader is now at version 8 and has been getting more powerful but also more cumbersome with each successive iteration. Steve Bass (PC World, January 2008) found a free program, Foxit Reader and Printer, that is compact, fast, and includes some nice extra features. I especially like that it allows searching all the PDF files in a directory for keywords. I tried that on a directory where I keep all the newsletter files since 2000 and got almost instantaneous results. Impressive! The print function works just fine. Foxit also has more sophisticated tools for annotating and writing PDF files and forms, but adds evaluation marks to the output unless you buy the Foxit Pro version ($39). You may not need that, since there are several other (free) ways to create PDF files, including openoffice.org Writer and MS Office 2007 (with a special download from Microsoft). My Epson scanner can scan images and also output them as PDF files. But at $39 Foxit is a bargain compared to Acrobat 8 Standard at $299.

Download Foxit Reader and Printer free from **http://www.foxitsoftware.com/**. Linux versions are also available.

Genealogy SIG News

At future meetings we will be exploring: Pedigree Resourse Files; RootsTelevision.com; and Google: A Goldmine of Genealogy Gems

We are "returning to fundamentals, latest in genealogy news, and the highlights of the genealogy magazines.

Nominating Committee Report

At the opening of the program meeting March 12th, this report of the nominating committee will be presented. After presenting this slate, the President will open the meeting for nominations from the floor. Floor nominations require that:

1) Nominees must be members in good standing.

2) Nominees must be present and express their willingness to serve.

3) Any nominee not present must have submitted to the Board prior to the meeting by mail to Diana Wolf, Secretary, Quad-Cities Computer Society, Tri-City Jewish Center 2715 30th, Rock Island, IL 61201 a written statement expressing their willingness to serve if elected.

If there are no further nominees, the President will ask for acceptance of this report by acclamation. If there are additional nominees, those positions with more than one candidate shall be decided by written ballot. Incumbents are identified with an asterisk, *.

President: Judi McDowell
Vice President: Patty Lowry
Secretary: Diana Wolf
Treasurer: Cheryl Heimburger

Directors-at-large:*Norm Dunlap
             *Jerry Heimburger
                 *Ted Huberts
                 *Jim Kristan
               Victor Panegos
              *Susan Peterson
                *Emily Smith
                *Len Stevens
             *Ken Welzenbach
             *Vicki Wassenhove

Director-at-large(immediate past president)   *Patty Lowry

Respectfully submitted, 2008
Nominating Committee:
Jerry Heimberger, (chair)

QCS Member Raffle

No winner won in theFebruary member raffle. Next months drawing worth $15!

QCS members, you too can win by attending the main meeting each month!

Congratulation

Carol Laws tied for 3rd place in the APCUG Photo Contest. The photo can be seen at **www.qcs.org**

Be sure to check you mailing label for your member expiretion date.

QCS Recycles!

Save your empty ink jet and laser toner cartridges and bring them to the General Meetings. The QCS will receive a refund check for returned cartridges. Another plus, this will keep them out of landfills

The QCS is also recycling your old CD's. Please bring your extra CD's to the Main Meeting. Thanks.!

QCS Meeting Dates

Sun	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Fri	Sat
	March 2008					1 Mar
2 Mar	3 Mar 7:00 PM **New!** Microsoft Office SIG Judi McDowell 309-314-1780 jmcdowell@mchsi.com	4 Mar	5 Mar 6:30 PM QCS Board Meeting Judi McDowell 309-314-1780 jmcdowell@mchsi.com	6 Mar	7 Mar Daylight Saving Time	8 Mar
9 Mar	10 Mar 7:00 PM Internet SIG Ted Huberts 309-792-9470 slowhand54@sbcglobal.net	11 Mar	12 Mar 5:45 PM Beginners SIG * 7:00 PM **Scott County E-recycling**	13 Mar	14 Mar	15 Mar
16 Mar	17 Mar 7:00 PM Genealogy SIG Len Stevens 563-359-9672 judylenstevens@msn.com	18 Mar	19 Mar 7:00 PM Digital Media SIG Norm Dunlap 309-798-2304 normdun@gmail.com	20 Mar	21 Mar	22 Mar
23 Mar	24 Mar 7:00 PM Windows SIG Larry Stone 309-787-5574 lstone521@mchsi.com	25 Mar	26 Mar	27 Mar	28 Mar	29 Mar
30 Mar	31 Mar	1 Apr April 2008	2 Apr 6:30 PM QCS Board Meeting Judi McDowell 309-314-1780 jmcdowell@mchsi.com	3 Apr	4 Apr Deadline for QBITS articles	5 Apr

***Beginner's SIG meets at Tri-City
Jewish Center
before the QCS program
Jim Kristan
309-755-8277
jmkris@gmail.com**

**ALL QCS MEETINGS NOW HELD AT
TRI-CITY JEWISH CENTER
2715 30TH
ROCK ISLAND, IL 61201
ALWAYS CALL AS INDICATED ON THE
CALENDAR
TO VERIFY MEETING TIME, LOCATION, AND
TOPIC INFORMATION
ALL QCS MEETING FACILITIES ARE
HANDICAPPED ACCESSIBLE.**

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Referred by: _____

Membership Level

New   Renewal

Full Time Student $20   ☐   ☐

Individual $30   ☐   ☐

Family $40   ☐   ☐

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